



Sue Forbes <suef607@gmail.com>

Testimony

1 message

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To: Sue Forbes <suef607@gmail.com>

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Sue,

Since I cannot be in Lansing today, can you or part of the team, submit the following testimony on my behalf? If possible, could one of you read it to the Senate and ask it be admitted to the record?

Thank you,

Catherine

Thank you Chair, committee members and staff for being here today and listening to our voices. For many years, creating the position of an ombudsman for all residents at the Homes for Veterans, to include ambulatory and Rankin members, has been discussed and set aside. It is time to stop discussing it and do it. As you are all aware, situations at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans have escalated to the point multiple hearings and changes were needed. Myself, as an advocate for residents at the Home, their families, caregivers, volunteers and others connected to that facility, and many others strongly believe if an ombudsman had been available to these residents, situations could have been addressed more quickly and effectively than they have been in the past. In the end, the health and well-being of the residents would not have been as compromised as happened.

While we went into the hearings and changes with open minds and were optimistic positive changes would happen, the need for an ombudsman is clearly needed now more than ever. The politics we have experienced are not acceptable. The current system, even after hearings, has failed to hold accountable the Board of Manager members and MVAA appointees who continue to fail the residents. The number one concern of residents, especially in Rankin, is that they need a fair, objective ombudsman to represent and help them. Someone who does not report to the Governor or his appointees.

At some point during the hearings, it was stated that position would require an expenditure of \$200,000 to \$500,000. We do find that amount to be excessive and question how that amount was calculated. There must be a way to create this position and do so at less cost.

So, myself and many others who could not be here today most strongly demand the creation of the ombudsman position detailed in SB 809 during this legislative term. Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical matter.

Catherine Kooyers

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